

High toxin levels linked with truck movement

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The authors of the draft IIT-Kanpur report also assessed PAHs in fine pollution particles (PM 2.5) at various spots in the city, such as Okhla, Vasant Kunj and Rohini, and found a similar spike in levels during winters. The winter average of a PAH, benzopyrene, was found to be 8 ng/m³ as opposed to a safe standard of 1 ng/m³. The researchers assessed 14 such PAH compounds.

The rise of PAHs comes after several studies had documented a fall in its levels after the CNG switch. For instance, a joint study by Central Pollution Control Board, IIT Delhi, University of Antwerp and other research institutions had found a reduction in total annual PAH concentrations from 38.2 ng/m³ in 1997 to 22.3 in 2000.

By 2003, total average PAH concentrations further dropped to 11.5 ng/m³ at Ba-

TROUBLE AHEAD

Air Quality Forecast		
Date	PM10	PM2.5
Dec 30	218	132
Dec 31	229	139
Jan 1	240	152

MODERATE: Those unusually sensitive to bad air should consider reducing prolonged exertion and heavy outdoor work

VERY POOR: People with heart or lung ailment, elderly and children should avoid prolonged exertion. Others, too, need to tread carefully

Source: SAFAR@MoES-IITM-IMD

hadur Shah Zafar Marg and 4.52 at Safdarjung.

That report had said PAH concentrations were higher during late night and early mornings, thereby pointing at the link with the movement of heavy vehicles from nearby states through Delhi.

It had also said private diesel vehicles were contributing to PAH pollution.

"PAH is carcinogenic. Another study by JNU in 2008 had also found that PAH levels had started to rise again after falling due to the CNG implementation. The IIT Kanpur study reiterates the trend. Among vehicles, diesel contributes much more to PAH pollution than petrol," said Anumita Roychowdhury, head of Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)'s clean air campaign.

The JNU study, led by P S Khillare, had found a 58-68% fall in PAH concentrations after the CNG switch in 2001. The sources of PAH are varied including industries, thermal plants, waste burning, vehicles, etc. PAH is a carcinogen, mutagen and reproductive toxin. Long-term inhalation can affect lung function, cause chest pain and irritation, according to UK's public health department.